

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANJUL 1478

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV GA

SUBJ: CABINET RESHUFFLE

1. FOLLOWING THE PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT, THERE HAS AGAIN BEEN MAJOR RESHUFFLING OF HIGH LEVEL OFFICIALS. REFERENCES WITHIN THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH TO "RAMPANT INCIDENCE OF FRAUD AND EMBEZZLEMENT" LEAD TO WIDESPREAD SPECULATION THAT MANY OF THE CHANGED ASSIGNMENTS WERE PUNATIVE IN NATURE.

2. THE MOST NOTABLE CHANGE WAS THE RESIGNATION OF VICE PRESIDENT A.B. N'JIE WHO IS BEING REPLACED BY MR. ASSAN MUSA CAMARA. MR. CAMARA HAS PREVIOUSLY SERVED AS VICE PRESIDENT AND IS RETURNING TO THAT POSITION FROM HIS PRESENT POST AS MINISTER OF FINANCE. THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE WILL NOW BE HEADED BY ONE OF THE GAMBIA'S MORE DYNAMIC AND AGGRESSIVE YOUNG MINISTERS, ALHAJI M.C. CHAM. THE NEW POSTING IS CLEARLY A PROMOTION FOR CHAM WHO HAS BEEN SERVING AS MINISTER OF ECONOMIC PLANNING. CHAM WILL BE REPLACED IN ECONOMIC PLANNING BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE, MR. SAIHOU SABALLY.

3. OTHER CHANGES INCLUDE THE RESIGNATION OF MR. KEBBA LEIGH FROM HIS POST AS MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND LANDS AND THE DEMOTION OF ALHAJI YAYA CEESAY FROM MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE TO MINISTRY OF STATE--A MINISTRY WITHOUT PORTFOLIO. LEIGH IS TO BE
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REPLACED BY LANDING JALLOW SONKO, PRESENTLY SERVING AS PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF TOURISM, AND CEESAY'S POSITION WILL NOW BE FILLED BY JANNEH L. B. DAFTEH WHO IS COMING FROM THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE.

4. CHARGE DISCUSSED THE FOREGOING CHANGES WITH PERM SEC MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS EBOU TAAL. TAAL REVEALED THAT THE CHANGES

WERE IN PART PROMPTED BY THE PRESIDENT'S CONCERN OVER CORRUPTION AT HIGH LEVELS OF THE GOVERNMENT. SPECIFICALLY CITED IN THIS REGARD WAS AGRICULTURE MINISTER YAYA CEESAY. TAAL CONFIDED THAT, WHEN QUESTIONED BY THE PRESIDENT, CEESAY HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO SATISFACTORILY EXPLAIN HIS ACQUISITION OF SEVERAL TRACTS OF VALUED PROPERTY, WHICH WERE CLEARLY BEYOND HIS MEANS.

5. RUMORS OF CORRUPTION WERE ALSO BEING CIRCULATED WITH RESPECT TO THE RESIGNATION OF VICE PRESIDENT A.B. N'JIE. WITHOUT STRICTLY REPUDIATING THESE ALLEGATIONS, THE PERMANENT SECRETARY SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT'S PRIMARY REASON IN CALLING FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT'S RESIGNATION WAS THAT HE HAD BECOME A POLITICAL LIABILITY. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT MR. N'JIE WAS WIDELY UNPOPULAR WITH THE GAMBIA POPULATION AND NOT WELL LIKED WITHIN THE PRESIDENT'S PARTY. A LATE-COMER TO THE PPP, N'JIE HAD ONLY JOINED WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE PPP WOULD BE THE DOMINATING PARTY.

6. MR. TAAL SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD RECENTLY BEEN SHOCKED AT DISCOVERING VARIOUS DEGREES OF CORRUPTION WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CIVIL SERVICE INCLUDING SOME MEMBERS IN WHOM HE HAD PLACED GREAT FAITH. HE SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS NOW TAKEN IT UPON HIMSELF TO LOOK INTO THE PRIVATE ASSETS OF SEVERAL HIGH RANKING OFFICIALS. THE PRESIDENT, SAID TAAL, IS PROUD OF THE GAMBIA'S RELATIVELY CLEAN RECORD WHEN COMPARED WITH OTHER WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND IS DETERMINED TO ELIMINATE CORRUPT PRACTICES WHEREVER THEY EXIST. THE SUBJECT OF CORRUPTION CONSUMED A SIGNIFICANT
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PORTION OF THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH BEFORE THE HOUSE WHICH WILL BE DISCUSSED IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE.
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